

/139 cont'd/

Third month, seventh day. (Sunday)

105 There was a dense fog this morning, and as we could not go out, I wrote several letters. As one of Mr. Wang's workmen intended to leave Oao-t'ing today, I gave him the letter to mail. Yüan-chiung's sickness was completely over by this time, and he had recovered his spirits. We roamed all day long in the neighboring Ch'i and Hsiao villages. In a number of places we saw Hsiao girls at work hulling rice, /140/ but, seeing the approach of strangers, they hid away immediately, so that we had no chance to take pictures of them.

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[138] In the afternoon a Chinese peddler came from Pao-t'ing with a load of black fish for sale. We bought two and a half catties for two hundred copper coins, and they made a rare dish in this deep mountain valley.

Third month, eighth day. (Monday)

361 This morning the fog was again dense till eight o'clock when the sun broke through. We walked leisurely to the lower Hsiao village on the other side. The village was occupied entirely by Hsiao, ten families in all, with three names, Li, Liu, and Huang. Headman /pao chang/ Li welcomed us warmly to his house, and we had a long, pleasant conversation together. When we were leaving, he sent his workmen to carry several catties of potatoes to be brought back with us. In return we gave him gifts of salt, kerosene, candles, etc.

387 In the afternoon we went to the upper Hsiao village to attend a Hsiao wedding. The bride was already thirty years old and had been married before to a Hsiao of Ta-pen village. When her husband died, she had brought her son and daughter back to live with her mother. Now she was to be married for the second time to a Hsiao of the same village. The bridegroom was of about the same age. At the ceremony the couple did not appear in any special apparel; they wore just plain clothes, a little cleaner than usual.

/72 cont. /

439 much confusion at times. Later the Chinese were officially prohibited from entering Miao villages to trade, but certain places were designated for sitting up markets, to be used once
 [443] every five days, six times a month. The best-known markets among the Miao are the Te-sheng-ying, Kan-tzu-p'ing, Ya-pao-chai, Ya-la-ying, and Hsin-chai (Illus. 40) of Feng-huang; the Ta-hsin-chai of Kan-ch'eng; and the Wei-ch'eng, Lung-t'an, and Ma-li-ch'ang of Yung-sui. The important articles of trade are salt, cloth, animals, /Illus. 39, p. 73/ /74/
 439 /Illus. 40 appears here/ and grains. Formerly, in trade between
 804 the Chinese and the Miao four small bowls were equal to one
 435 sheng. For cloth one measure between two hands was considered four ch'ih. The price of cattle and horses are set by the number of fists, regardless of age. The method of measurement by fist is like this. They take a bamboo splint and wind it around the fore ribs of the cow to set its girth, and then they measure the bamboo splint with their fists. A water buffalo which measures 16 fists is big, and a common yellow cow which measures 13 fists is large. The operation is called "fisting a cow." In the case of horses age does come into consideration. They measure a horse from the ground to the saddle place by comparing it with a wooden rod. A 13-fist high one is big. A horse with few teeth but of many fists fetches a higher price, and the reverse fetches a lower price. This operation is called "comparing horses." (1) In recent

1. Miao Fang-pei Lan,
 Vol. 8, "Feng-su K'ao."

[177] times, in the sale of rice, cloth, and other articles, they have adopted the Chinese standards of weight and measurement, but "fisting cows" and "comparing horses" are sometimes still done.

264 Food. — The Miao usually eat two meals a day, but in spring and summer they eat three meals. The staples are

262 maize, kaoliang, rice, sweet potatoes, and kidney beans.

252 There are two ways of eating maize: grinding it with water

[text continues on p. 106]

69: Lewis T-5 (1950) 1951. AM 1 Indochina
Miao AES
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INTO THE MEO COUNTRY

Besides the Meos' predilection for mountain tops they have other ^M claims to distinction. They are utterly independent and quite fear- ¹⁸¹ less. Their passion for freedom compels them to live in the smallest of villages and, apart from such rare events as the invasion of 1860, they will not tolerate chiefs or leaders. If forcibly brought to lower altitudes they are soon taken ill and die. They are normally pacific, but if compelled to fight are apt to eat the livers of slain enemies.

The Meos are the only people in Indo-China who are not in the ^M slightest concerned with evil spirits, although they admit their ⁷⁷¹ existence. Their complete indifference to all the ghouls and devils that plague the races surrounding them has invested them with enormous prestige, which they are careful to cultivate. They like to encourage the belief, prevalent among the Thais, that they are were-wolves and can turn into tigers at wish. They have no funerary cults but celebrate a funeral — or any other event providing the slightest excuse — with orgies of drinking. Husbands and wives keep their own property. Children are given the greatest degree of ^M freedom; and sexual promiscuity before marriage — even with ⁸³⁶ strangers — is general. 'Sacred groves' exist — there is a celebrated one at Dong-Van in Tonkin — to which Meo girls resort, and offer themselves freely to all comers. It is said that large-scale maps, upon which the locations of such groves have been scrupulously plotted, are the prized possessions of most French garrisons in Tonkin. Besides breeding fine, white dogs, they are experts at taming monkeys and birds, particularly a kind of minah which ^M they teach a wide repertoire of imitative sounds. The Meos will ²³¹ only part with their animals for an enormous price — payable in solid ⁴³⁵ silver which they immediately convert into massive jewellery.

But the first village beyond Muong Kassy, perched on a bare hill- ST top and reached laboriously up a long winding path, proved not to ³⁶¹ belong to Meos but the 'black' Thais — so called from the distinctive dress of their women. It was like climbing up to an eagle's eyrie and finding crows in possession. A rare species of crow though. Check-

/31 cont. /

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In the case of adoption, very many points must be observed in accordance with Meau customs which go into great detail. Childless /32/ couples seek to adopt a child. Only children of the male or female sex up to the age of at most ten years, however, may be adopted. The couple now look for a suitable child of a mother who has especially many children, if possible of their own sib /Sippe/, and furthermore obtain the consent of the heads of both of the large families /Grossfamilien, extended families/ involved, provided that such a head of the large family exists in the case of the child to be adopted. The couple also makes this intention known to the parents of the child to be adopted. If the parents have also agreed, the childless couple slaughters a chicken as a sacrifice to the god of heaven and the ancestors and informs the latter of the completed transaction by burning some chicken blood on sacred paper (see the chapter "Handicrafts"). With this the adopted child is received into the new family community with all rights and duties.

[782]

If no children of one's own sib are available, one tries to obtain a strange child. This presents difficulties if its parents are still alive, for, as a rule, children are not sold. The situation is different if the parents are dead and the oldest of the orphaned siblings is not in a position to take proper care of the younger ones, as would be his duty. Such children are sold for the purpose of adoption. Sometimes special intermediaries are used for this. These are traders, usually Chinese, who buy and sell children as well as all kinds of commodities (see the chapter, "Trade").

[48]

• [435]

For such a child, if a girl, fifty pieces of silver, for a boy about seventy, are paid. The price varies according to the age and health of the child. If the child is from one's own sib, the price is usually somewhat lower. My observations are therefore contrary to the reports of the Siam. Soc. Journal (1), but

[114]

/207 cont. /

782 sacrificial animal among the Meau in China. Whether the
 231 slaughtering of buffalo in connection with weddings and mourn-
 ing mentioned in the old Chinese literature, according to
 Eberhard (4), was done as a sacrifice or only for provisions for

4. II, p. 252.

the guests is not revealed from the description.

782 Burnt offerings play an important role. Among them are
 the burning of incense candles and the burning of the fat-lamp
 (Fig. 51) on the altar during the sacrificial act and conjurations,
 at which, however, there is at the same time the practical and
 previously mentioned thought that the spirits, like human beings,
 need light in order to see. Wax candles are sometimes lighted
 instead of the fat-lamp. Also of significance among the Meau

[778] is the burning of spirit-money and sacral paper upon which, as
 already described, blood of the sacrificial animals is dripped.

Before slaughtering an animal, the animal is purchased from
 the spirits by burning under its snout spirit-money of the value
 of the animal (III. 103).¹ Gold paper, which the Meau do not
 [439] make themselves, but buy from the Lao, is also sacrificed to the
 high Father-Mother spirit. Since it is difficult to burn, it is
 folded into small cones before being set afire. Such a tiny
 ● [435] shako of gold paper has the spirit-value of 25 silver pieces.

/208/ Any other kind of sacrifice to the ancestors and good
 spirits is unknown. When sacrifices are made to evil spirits,
 however, an uneven number of offerings are scattered in all four
 directions and the evil spirits are requested not to torment
 people; they are giving them what they have, but they are poor.

243 As soon as the first rice has been cut, a small sacrificial
 782 hut is erected on the rice field, and a sacrifice, which consists
 of a thousand ticals in spirit-money, salt, alcohol, and some
 rice, is offered to the good spirit that dwells in the rice field.
 All this is placed in the small hut for the spirit.

¹[see cat 116, p 704- ANALYST]

Miao AE5

/240 cont. /

426 paid back, including the interest. Natural products can take the place of money or silver. If /241/ the creditor and debtor cannot agree on the evaluation of the goods, the creditor will ask the debtor to sell his wares elsewhere for silver and to pay him back with it.

If the debtor is not in a position to repay the loan, he must reimburse the creditor in another way, for example, by laying out a field large enough so that the harvest will cover the sum of the loan. Therefore, if a Meau has borrowed the 21 baskets of rice mentioned, he lays out a field that will yield 28 baskets.

426 If the debtor cannot satisfy the creditor in this way, a
432 sale takes place, not of the debtor himself or his wives or his adult
858 children, but of those children who have not yet reached maturity.
[567] In this case, the debtor is obligated to give an appropriate num-
[736] ber of these children to the creditor in lieu of payment. The
[597] creditor is now free to decide whether he wants to bring up the
[435] children as unfree persons, to adopt them, or to resell them to
his tribesmen or to migratory traders. If children have to be
turned over to a creditor, their value is fixed at 70 pieces of
silver for a boy and 50 pieces for a girl.

426 Interest is demanded only from members of other sibs
614 and is paid to such persons. Within the sib the granting of loans to sib members who need help as a result of crop failure, cattle deaths, or lightning is regarded as a sib duty.

426 The members of a large /extended/ family are not re-
596 sponsible for the debts of the head of the large family during his
768 lifetime. If the head should die before repaying his debt,
however, the entire large family is jointly responsible for the amount of the debt. In like manner, the head of a large family is not responsible for the debts incurred by a member of his family without his knowledge. This is not affected by the death of the debtor. On the other hand, the head is responsible for debts incurred by a member of the large family with the knowledge and approval of the head, even if the debtor should die before the debt is repaid.

/342 cont. /

224 animal victim, such as an imitation of the "piping" of a mouse and the like.

Whereas for stalking firearms are used as a rule, in ambush the Meau prefer the noiseless crossbow with the effective poisoned bolts.

[123] How skilled the Meau are as hunters was revealed at my very first meeting with them. Later, besides my medical knowledge, it was precisely my hunting ability that was decisive for the success of my ethnographic work, even though it was considerably inferior to that of some of the Meau. For example, one of my informants, a man of about forty-five, had bagged a great deal of game with his primitive weapons during his lifetime, which also affected him economically. 224 434 556 He had killed more than 20 elephants, and for the ivory of each of them he was paid 200 to 400 ticals by the Chinese traders. Since one only needs to add 10 per cent to arrive at the amount in marks, that amounts to 220 to 440 marks /343/ for each tusk. Moreover, he had killed two rhinoceros, each of which brought him 800 ticals. Considerable sums had likewise flowed in to him for buffalo horns and stag antlers, whose number he no longer knew because he had killed so many of these animals. This is immediately understandable if one remembers that the Thailanders and especially the Chinese pay a thousand ticals for the first growth of the horns of a stag in its second year /for the horns of the Kolbenhirsch/. [439] [435] because it is regarded as a precious aphrodisiac. Even though the traders undoubtedly gained many times this amount, nevertheless such proceeds from hunting booty are of great importance. My informant had this to thank for being able to buy three wives. Apart from the material side, however, such success in hunting, considering the situation with regard to game in northern Thailand, represents a prodigious hunting accomplishment which a European with precision rifles could scarcely match, whereas my informant had only his primitive weapons at his disposal. [595]

Miao AE5

/381 cont./

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[437] Furthermore, opium plays a very important role, both as
[412] a stimulant and remedy and as an article of trade (see the
chapter, "Trade"). When the poppy fruits are almost ripe, they
are slit with a special instrument, the poppy-slitting knife
(Ill. 73 and Fig. 289). This consists of three iron blades tied
together. The three sharp points of the combined blades are
used to slit the capsule, from which a gummy juice flows out.
By the next morning it has hardened and is now collected in
gourd bowls with a scraper (Fig. 290). This substance is then
pressed into bamboo vessels and left for two or three days,
whereupon it exudes water. Now it is kneaded and pounded
in mortars and rolled into cylinders, which are wrapped in paper.
[439] This produces the raw opium, the /382/ /Figs. 289-298 appear
here/ article of trade. For one pound the Meau receive 18 ticals
[435] from the Chinese traders; the traders then make a profit of
many hundred times this amount.

In order to make the ardently desired stimulant from this
raw product, it is boiled three times in water in special copper
kettles (Fig. 291). For the first cooking, one adds water to the
opium in the amount of ten times the weight and cooks it until
the opium mixes with the water and forms a homogeneous sub-
stance. Then the liquid is filtered through a double layer of
bamboo paper (Fig. 192). To the extract obtained, fresh water
is added in the amount of 50 per cent of its quantity, the filtered
residue is likewise mixed in, and the whole is boiled anew and
[439] filtered again. The filtration residue is now thrown away, and
the liquid obtained is boiled until it forms a viscous mass which,
for trading, may be boiled down until it is quite hard.

The drug is swallowed with water by the Meau, as well
as smoked in Chinese fashion, but not chewed. Older men
usually eat some opium in the morning but smoke a pipe in
the evening. For this purpose the proper amount is /383/
speared on a needle (Fig. 293), then heated over a small lamp
(Figs. 294 and 295) until it becomes soft (Ill. 74), and then
stuck into the opium pipe (Fig. 296) which is smoked.

‡ [See cat 116, p573- ANALYST]

/424 cont. /

439 has already been mentioned, obtain iron, metal pots and pans, flints, matches, sulphur needed for the making of gunpowder, salt, insofar as it is not purchased directly from the neighboring valley peoples, cowrie shells, buttons, cretonne, silk, small mirrors, thread, needles, and embroidery thread. Unfortunately, these traders also bring in fabrics whose importation is superfluous. Moreover, they sell the coveted magic articles and amulets and deal in children for adoption, or even women.

● [435] The traders make a profit of several hundredfold, since, besides their not very pronounced commercial talent, the Meau lack the connection with the rest of the world needed for a proper evaluation of the worth of their wares.

[487] Business with the traders, who scrupulously seek out village after village, takes place during the dry season, since the mountain paths are impassable in the rainy season. A trade journey of the Haw therefore takes months. The wares desired by the Meau are carried by porters and pack animals up and down through the mountainous terrain and through the virgin forests. Barter, formerly the only type of trade, is still widely practiced. In the first place there is the raw opium of the Meau, and then stags' horns, the horns of the rhinoceros, and ivory. Rattan lianas, finished baskets, and field produce also serve as articles for barter, primarily the latter because the many porters of the traders need food.

436 Besides the traditional barter goods, a means of payment
437 used today is a range of kinds of money, and, to be sure, from those countries that have been traversed by the Meau. For the most part, the coins in circulation are those which officially represent the currency of the country in which the Meau happen to be living. Thus, in Burmese territory rupees are principally used, in Thailand ticals, in Indochina piasters, on Chinese territory the current Chinese standard; interestingly enough, besides these kinds of money, Russian coins are said to have been in circulation among the Meau in former times.

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The Meau are not greedy. In spite of their hard life, money and property play a less important role than the lives of human beings. In reply to my question, "If your house were on fire, what would you save first?" I repeatedly received the answer from the Negro peoples, and from the Akha, too, for that matter: "My money" or "My ornaments." The Meau, on the other hand, said without thinking twice: "First the people, and last of all the cash."

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The behavior of the Meau who accompanied me into the valleys was interesting. As a people with little talent for business, and in addition without any opportunity to compare the prices which are offered or demanded of them by the migratory traders who seek out their villages, they now saw in the valley cities the same commodities offered at prices which amounted to only a fraction of those that they were accustomed to paying the traders. Nevertheless, no buying mania seized the Meau. They bought only articles that they had carefully considered beforehand, especially yarn, copper kettles, blue cloth for making men's clothing, and, in only one case, under the first impact of the uprooting, a Japanese man's shirt. When they thought that they had covered their needs, the rest of their money was carefully put away, and they immediately decided to acquire wives for their sons with it in their homeland.

574
[123]

It was obvious to us that we owed them, whose hospitality we had enjoyed in the mountains, maintenance during these days. For every handful of rice they repeatedly thanked us, though they /465/ must have regarded our hospitality as a matter of course. No wanderer, even a stranger to the tribe, will ask in vain for lodging or food in a Meau village. The Nordic proverb, "Nobody roams through Lappland's mountains without being hungry," could be exactly reversed: "Everybody roams through the forested mountains of the Meau well fed." To be sure, for the European it should be added that for our taste the food of the Lapps, for example, salted coffee with cut-up reindeer cheese or dried raw reindeer meat and the like, is not particularly agreeable or to our taste, whereas the food of the Meau is often not only tasty, but altogether wholesome.